

Women in Organizations: Why Our Differences Matter and What to Do About It



Center for Gender in Organizations

December 2005

This CGO Commentaries is drawn from the opening keynote address that Evangelina Holvino, Senior Research Faculty at the Center for Gender in Organizations and President of Chaos Management, Ltd. delivered at the New England Women of Color Town Hall, "Professional Women of Color: Patterns in the Tapestry of Difference," held May 6, 2004, at Simmons College, Boston, MA.

I start my talk with this premise: the best way for women to achieve power, support each other, and make our organizations better and more effective is by engaging with our differences as women within and across racial-ethnic groups. But in order to face our differences, we will need to challenge the dominant cultural assumption that the best way to connect with other women is through our similarities.¹

This morning I will review information to support the importance of attending to our differences and present examples of how ignoring our differences—among each other as women of color and across women of color and White women—harms us and diminishes our effectiveness in the organizations in which we work. While I use examples from a variety of settings, most examples come from my work with Latinas in organizations and from my own experience.² I will discuss two dynamics that hinder our ability to work with each other across our differences and will conclude with four skills that we at the Center for Gender in Organizations (CGO) at the Simmons School of Management have found useful in working with differences.

First, I want to share some highlights about our status as women in today's organizations, because we have and we have not come a long way. The average female executive now earns 68 cents for every dollar a male executive earns, and women's participation in professional managerial roles has increased from 4% in the early 1970s to almost 50% today. Women have entered occupations that were previously closed to them, and though the

number of women CEOs of Fortune 500 corporations can still be counted on one hand, women now occupy 11.7% of board room seats and make up 12.5% of corporate officers.³

But these statistics are misleading. When we move from what I call "generic woman" to differentiating among women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, we get a very different picture. Recent statistics on the economic status of women are revealing of some of these differences: in 1999, White women earned on average 70 cents to the dollar of White men; African American women 62 cents; Native American women 57 cents, and Latinas 52 cents. To my surprise, Asian American women earned more than White women – 75 cents to the dollar of White men.⁴ While White women represent 39% of the professional and managerial ranks, African American women represent only 30% and Latinas 23%. The percentage of Latina corporate officers in the Fortune 500 is a minuscule 0.24% (25 out of a total of more than 10,000). Only 21 Latinas serve on boards of Fortune 1,000 companies.⁵ It is not a hushed comment in many circles that the gains of "women" are really the gains of White women – the "whitewash dilemma."⁶

In order to face our differences, we will need to challenge the dominant cultural assumption that the best way to connect with other women is through our similarities.

Scholars are increasingly acknowledging that the search for a unified women's agenda or a "woman's voice" is elusive.⁷ Instead there are many voices, because race and ethnicity, sexual identity, and class do make a difference in terms of which women advance and how far they advance (or not) in a corporation. And while the statis-

tics speak to the impact in the material consequences facing women of different social backgrounds, I would like to address other, more subtle, examples of how differences among women make a difference in daily practices at work. Further, I examine why we need to work with our differences in order to 1) better accomplish our jobs, and 2) make more gains for all women in organizations.

Group level differences impact us at work in two major ways: 1) in our life and work opportunities, and 2) in our self image.

To illustrate this need, I will share a few vignettes from my practice:

- A Latina researcher is seeking funding to study the unique experiences of Latina leaders in corporations. On approaching a major funding corporation, she is sent by the White woman program officer she contacts to inquire about funding opportunities at The Welfare Foundation.
- A White woman manager advises her White lesbian protégé to never build alliances “downward”, meaning she should not join her administrative assistant in advocating for the establishment of a GLBT support group in the corporation.
- A Latina team leader confronts her White superior about the superior’s lack of responsiveness to an important communication. The “boss” closes the door to her office in anger and cautions the Latina to “not get too uppity.”
- A White woman recruiter tells a Mexican American interviewee at the end of a successful interview that she will be hired because she looks White.
- An “up and coming” younger Latina wonders if older Latinas in the organization resent her success in the corporation and whether they will want to mentor her.
- In a workshop for Hispanic managers, a Latina describes her experience on the job as “feeling invisible.” While some Latinas immediately identi-

fy—“yes, it feels like being discounted all the time”—others in the group deny her experience.

And I could go on. Each of these examples illustrates problems of not attending to our differences and their consequences. Not attending to differences impacts determinations about who is considered talented or not; it affects the development of leadership and how people go about mentoring, coaching, and sponsoring women who are “different than them;” it impacts assessments about performance and the rewards and career advancement decisions that depend on such assessments. It affects teamwork, quality of work, and organizational learning—all hallmarks of successful organizations in today’s competitive environment. Because, for example, will the Latina who was cautioned to “not get too uppity” trust the evaluation from her supervisor? I don’t think so. Does the White boss appreciate being held accountable by the Latina subordinate? Clearly not. Will the Latina feel that she can give and receive honest feedback in the future? Unlikely. Some years later, when the Latina leaves the organization to start her own business, the boss will be at a loss to understand why the Latina did not go for that promotion and why it is so hard to retain Latinas.⁸

I now will review four premises to deepen the analysis of the previous examples.

First, in my work I focus on the differences that arise among us as women because we are members of particular social groups. That is, these are group-level, rather than individual-level, differences. Thus, ignoring our differences is not merely an individual preference—it is just not enough to be a “good person”—because we are constantly enacting the group memberships that form our identities. In addition, ignoring differences is not an interpersonal problem that can be fixed by women just talking to each other. In fact, we get totally derailed when we think of it only in interpersonal terms, because the problem demands an awareness of the systemic and societal dimensions of differences.

Second, these group-level differences impact us at work in two major ways: 1) in our life and work opportunities, and 2) in our self-image. The concept of group membership is difficult to understand, especially for dominant groups such as Whites in the U.S. One of the major differences between White women and women of color is

that White women rarely want to talk about race as difference and women of color very much want to talk about race as a difference that impacts all of our lives.

Third, this system of group relations advantages some and disadvantages others.⁹ The system is kept going by the structures in place, in addition to the behaviors of all those involved. But it is a system based on social, economic, political, and cultural power differences. In order to understand these differences among women, we need to understand this system of group relations in which women of color have a different relationship to White men than do White women.¹⁰

Finally, in today's work environment, the ways in which we are advantaged and disadvantaged can be very subtle. Racism and sexism are not so overt anymore, but as our work at CGO shows, disadvantage is embedded in the everyday practices of work.¹¹

The difference between the premises held by White women and by women of color concerning what it takes to succeed is likely to complicate attempts to build alliances for organizational change among them.

While I have focused on some of the material consequences of our differences, such as different salaries, advancement opportunities, and positional power in organizations, I now turn to the more subtle and non-material consequences of our differences at work. These are differences that make us perceive the organization differently and thus behave differently. For example, a 1999 study by Catalyst found that White women and women of color rank the factors for their success differently: White women attribute their success to exceeding performance expectations, but women of color report that it is more important to have high visibility and mentors because their performance is devalued in comparison to that of White women.¹² The difference between the premises held by White women and by women of color concerning what it takes to succeed is likely to complicate attempts to build alliances for organizational change among them.

Notions of success take me to the theme of leadership and authority, and how women of color are perceived as leaders and allowed to lead (or not) in comparison to White women. By authority I mean “the right to do work in service of the task.” Authority is exercised by leaders and granted by followers, making it a relation between leaders and followers, not just a set of qualities and competencies.¹³ When I talk to Latinas about their leadership, what is salient is how they feel their leadership is constantly questioned. Rita Dumas, an African American author, observed the same dynamic for Black women in leadership positions – an experience of “not being taken in” and “not being worked with” in our leadership roles.¹⁴

A recent example is based on a Latina colleague's experience at work. As the director of a workgroup, my colleague had developed a new product and set some minimal guidelines by which researchers in her group could develop similar products. When she invited one of the senior researchers to take up this opportunity because of her expertise, she again included the guidelines she had developed. The senior researcher responded, “I had a different understanding of what the process is. Let me know when you have some time to talk.” Now, if my colleague had developed the idea for the new product, the process to follow, and communicated it, how could this senior researcher question the process? Either the researcher felt that the guidelines were not appropriate, but did not want to say so directly, or she felt she could question my colleague's authority to set the guidelines, or she was relying on information from others in the workgroup who might have informally told her their version of the process.

It is as if Latina authority is an oxymoron.¹⁵ I've heard many different ways in which Latinas' authority is questioned in organizations: “always having to prove yourself,” “always having to perform,” “feeling under the microscope all the time,” “needing to provide reams of data to make a recommendation,” “keeping every scrap of paper and putting everything in writing, so I can remind people of what I said and accomplished,” “one's competence and experience constantly ignored.” Some White women and men might say, “But that happens to everyone—that is the price of leadership—if you don't want to deal with it, get out.” And yet, I would argue that this is another difference we have to explore: women of color do not observe it as the same, do not experience it

as the same, and do not see the results being the same in terms of promotions, advancement, rewards, and inclusion.

This questioning of women of color in authority has much to do with stereotypes we hold about each other and images of the other which hinder relations across differences. For example, if African American women are seen as strong, independent, and resilient, while White women are seen as delicate, powerless, and in need of care, we can understand why the type of support members of these two different groups experience at work is not the same.¹⁶ For Latina professionals, stereotypes at work remain very much unarticulated, but the one of the Latina as submissive explains why assertive Latinas might be seen by their superiors and peers as “uppity”.

These frameworks and examples make the case for women coming together across our differences to take political action in organizations—that is, to use our power to change the system that does not necessarily work for all equally. By political action I do not mean “turning the world upside down.” In the middle ages, festivals and carnivals were celebrated to take people’s minds off their everyday lives, off the hard times and hard work. One of these festivals was called “The World Upside Down”: women dressed up as men, the rich traded places with the poor, servants gave orders to their masters, and men tended to the children while their wives worked the fields.¹⁷ But the festival did not change the social order. Today, the fear of “the world turned upside down” if we work toward true equality seems to be more a projection by Whites to rationalize their fear of people of color than a reality of what we want.

What to Do?: Working with and across our Social Differences as Women

I see four options to addressing the problem, and the possibilities, of working with our differences as women. The first option is to continue to pretend that these differences don’t matter—we can continue to be silent about them and pretend they don’t exist. The second option is that those of us who think these differences do matter can act as if what we know to be true for ourselves and our group is all we need to know.¹⁸ The third option is to leave it to chance—some of us know how to do this work and others don’t. And the fourth option,

which I want to embrace and elaborate on, is to engage our group differences as part of our work agenda as professional women.

Fortunately, feminist scholars have learned some important lessons about working with differences. Let me review two dynamics that do not support working with differences and four skills that do.

The option I want to embrace is to engage our group differences as part of our work agenda as professional women.

First, privileging one aspect of identity to the exclusion of others does not support working across differences. *Simultaneity*¹⁹ means that we each belong to many social groups at the same time, which complicates our identities and the fluid quality of our advantages and disadvantages within same-race and same-ethnicity groups and with other racial and ethnic groups. For example, while I am disadvantaged as a Hispanic woman, I am advantaged by my education, my heterosexuality, my Christianity, my U.S. citizenship, and my lighter skin color, and these advantages position me differently in relation to other White women and women of color. But we have a tendency to focus on our disadvantaged status, to ignore our privilege, and to simplify the way we see ourselves along one dimension instead of using our complex identities to connect across our differences.

Thus, White women focus on gender, ignoring their racial privilege. When engaging with women of color, most White women don’t want to talk about race, and in particular, about the different relationship they have to White men. But women of color want to very much talk about race and the different impact it has on our lives – the lives of both White women and women of color. African American women, on the other hand, tend to favor race and silence gender in what has been termed “gender silence.”²⁰

In order to engage with Latinas’ difference, you have to engage with differences in language, accent, culture and ethnicity, citizenship, and the political dominance of the United States in our countries of origin. The unproductive dynamic is acting as if Latinas need to make a choice

between race and ethnicity, when for us, both are salient. White and African American women may prefer to engage in a Black-White discourse that makes invisible all other groups and relegates them to the U.S. historical experiences of slavery or immigration.²¹ Ignorance of the experience of Latinos—for example, the political role of the U.S. in toppling down democratically elected governments in Chile, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic; supporting brutal dictatorships like Batista, Somoza, and Pinochet’s regimes; appropriating the land of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans—that ignorance is unhelpful in working with Latinas across and within our own group. We all must learn from Latinas what is important to us beyond Cinco de Mayo celebrations, tacos, and rice and beans.

Another dynamic that does not support working with our differences is what Susan Friedman describes as the cycle of denial, accusation, confession, and eventual disconnect in women’s groups.²² Many will recognize this cycle in our past efforts to work with our differences. Narratives of *denial*, which emphasize female unity and similarities, suggest that all disadvantage stems from the primacy of gender. These narratives, produced mostly by White women, implicitly deny the significance of race in social relations by focusing solely on gender. The question, “We are all women, aren’t we?” is an example of this kind of narrative. *Accusation*, produced mostly by women of color, follows denial and is a response to the way White women privilege gender as the category of analysis. Narratives of accusation demand that White women acknowledge their power in a racist system that privileges being White. Sojourner Truth’s famous “And a’n’t I a woman?” represents this position. Her question points out the way in which the very definition of womanhood was already coded as White.²³ *Confession* usually follows denial and accusation. Confessions are largely produced by White women in response to the accusations of women of color, which make racial privilege visible and disturbing to them. “Oh, yes, you are right; I am a racist and tell me more,” conveys the tone of this response, but nothing changes. Denial, accusation, and confession lead to a dead end, a dead end brought about by women getting caught in the moves of confession and accusation, while their anger, guilt, and shame remain very much hidden.

For women to be able to get out of this bind, Friedman suggests they need scripts of *relational positionality*. That

is, women must recognize that power circulates in many directions, and because we all have the experiences of advantage and disadvantage, this knowledge allows for the possibility of connection that breaks the cycle.²⁴ But feeling pain and shame cannot be avoided, and it is difficult to “go there” and stay with these uncomfortable emotions long enough so as to paradoxically make a connection through them. I believe that acknowledging this pain, hurt, and shame is a condition of engagement for women of color in working with White women.²⁵

I believe that acknowledging this pain, hurt, and shame is a condition of engagement for women of color in working with White women.

Now I will turn to the four helpful skills for working across differences and apply them to an example of successfully working across differences.²⁶

The scene is a committee planning a conference at a women’s research center in a major business school. The committee is composed of all women, members of the research center, in the various roles of co-directors, fellow, faculty, and researcher, with one Latina, one Black, and four White women.

The opening statement by the co-director, which provides the context for the group’s task at the beginning of this first two-hour planning meeting, is that the topic of “building alliances” was selected because of the overwhelming support for it by the participants in last year’s conference. It was also selected because it reflects the center’s experience with gender change interventions, which suggests that one of the most difficult, but potentially leveraging, strategies for achieving organizational change is to forge alliances among women in order to build strong internal constituencies for gender equity.

It is this explanation of the origins of the conference theme that makes the Latina want to *ask a difficult question* and *inquire* further on the topic and the committee’s own planning process. She does not remember it like that and wonders why. She mentions that the initial report by the organizers of last year’s conference does not mention the theme of alliances, but lists other topics instead. She recalls that the conference theme was selected at the cen-

ter's program planning retreat from a list of potential themes suggested by conference participants and discussed by all center members a few months earlier. She remembers feeling that choosing the topic may have served to eliminate other themes like class differences or sexual identity, topics more challenging to explore in a business school.

A moment of silence followed this *confrontation*.²⁷ But instead of silencing the Latina voice, the group went on to explore their differences and to examine the process and assumptions leading to the selection of the conference theme. The discussion that followed revealed the complex dynamics of engaging in a dialogue across differences that surfaced racial and ethnic assumptions relevant to the work task.

Lina, the Latina faculty and co-organizer of last year's conference on the topic of race, class, and gender intersections, is asked by others to expand on her thinking (*inquire*) and shares her insight (*disclose*) that "building alliances across differences" may be a White feminist solution to the dilemma of working across differences—other feminist frameworks may not give the name "building alliances" to what is needed to work across differences. Brenda, the African American research fellow and project leader of this year's conference, supports the Latina by drawing from her research on Black women, where Black women state that they are not necessarily interested in forming alliances with White women, but want to be understood by White women and to address issues at the intersection of race, gender, and power. She suggests that Black women may be more interested in forming alliances with White men because that is where organizational power resides.²⁸ Alice, a White faculty and co-organizer of this year's conference, suggests that the "rush" to solve differences through coalition and alliance building may be part of White women's comfort with problem solving and discomfort with exploring and confronting differences with women of color. Alice, Brenda, and Dev agree with Lina: "I begin to see what you're saying" (*showing support*). "White women see forming alliances as a solution to gaining organizational power, and women of color want to first address the questions of in whose interest; for what purpose; and with whom do they form alliances?" Mary, a White faculty and center co-director, articulates a statement that *seeks common ground*: "So, to follow on this point and address the issue, we would need to reframe the theme

of the conference so as to question, instead of assume, that building alliances is 'the solution' or the preferred framework for moving forward in working across differences." Brenda adds that "building bridges" may be a better metaphor than "building alliances" if the group wants to explore working across the variation in women's experiences with difference. At this point they all agreed that a major shift had occurred in the framing of the conference as a result of engaging with their differences, and so the new title of the conference became, "Working with Our Differences: Chasms, Bridges, Alliances?," with a purposeful question mark at the end of the title to signal the need to keep the inquiry up front.

In this example, we can see enacted the four skills we at CGO have found important in working with differences: 1) inquiring and disclosing; 2) asking difficult questions; 3) making differences explicit (confronting) and showing support; and 4) seeking common ground. We have found that each of these is a complex skill in itself. For example, there is an assumption that members of privileged groups will inquire, while members of subordinate groups are expected to disclose. And yet what we know is that it is important for all parties to both inquire *and* disclose.

Four skills in working with our differences are: 1) Inquiring and disclosing; 2) asking difficult questions; 3) making differences explicit (confronting) and showing support; and 4) seeking common ground.

The skill of asking difficult questions refers to asking a question that is difficult for me to ask of the other, not that I think will be difficult for the other to answer. These are embarrassing questions; they show my ignorance; they require that I surface what is usually kept silenced; they make me feel vulnerable; they open up a previously taboo subject. In this vignette, Lina's question about the story of the origins of the conference theme was a difficult question to ask at the opening of this group's planning discussion.

We know that these are hard skills to practice. It is even harder in the context of the workplace, where the pres-

sure to perform and the pace of work are relentless. On the other hand, we all have examples of times when working with differences was successful – when doing so enhanced our relationships, our work products, and our own sense of self.

Conclusion

Our challenge as women of different backgrounds, identities, and social positions is clear: Can we escape the unhelpful dynamics and try out some of the behaviors that we know work? Can we engage in dialogue within same racial-ethnic groups and across groups by asking and answering some difficult questions? Can we identify common ground as well as articulate our differences in order to enhance our working together?

I have stressed the importance of working with our differences to make some real gains, not just in the status of individual women in organizations, but also in the status of all women and in the quality of our work and our organizational outputs. In order to do so, we need to go deeper into our differences and stop hiding in our similarities within and across groups. We also need to practice the four skills and avoid the unhelpful dynamics. I believe there is much at stake and no recipes, so I leave you with the words of a Spanish poet, which speak to me of the work ahead: “*Caminante no hay camino, se hace camino al andar*—Traveler there is no path; the road is made by walking.”²⁹

Endnotes

¹Sheridan, B.A., Holvino, E., and Debebe, G. 2004. *CGO Commentaries* No. 3: Beyond diversity: Working across differences for organizational change. Boston, MA: Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management.

²It is not that I want to be exclusive of other groups and other experiences, but as throughout the day [of the May 6, 2004 Women of Color Town Hall] we will hear stories from other speakers about their own racial-ethnic group perspectives, I want you to hear more about the experience of Hispanic women, of which so many know so little.

³Catalyst. 2000. *2000 Catalyst Census of Women Corporate Officers and Top Earners*. New York: Catalyst; and Inset: Strength in numbers. 2005. *Newsweek*, October 24, p. 66.

⁴Institute for Women's Policy Research. 2004. *Women's Economic Status in the States: Wide Disparities by Race, Ethnicity and Region*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research.

⁵Catalyst. 2003. *Advancing Latinas in the Workplace: What Managers Need to Know*. New York: Catalyst.

⁶Bettors-Reed, B.L. and Moore, L. 1995. Shifting the management development paradigm for women. *Journal of Management Development*, 14(2): 24-38.

⁷For a review and analysis of the literature see Holvino, E. 2001. CGO Working Paper No. 14: *Complicating Gender: The Simultaneity of Race, Gender, and Class in Organization Change(ing)*. Boston, MA: Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management; and Calás, M. and Smircich, L. Forthcoming. From the ‘woman’s point of view’ ten years later: Towards a feminist organization studies. In S. Clegg, C. Hardy, and W. Nord (Eds.), *Handbook of Organization Studies*, 2nd ed.

⁸39% of minority women-owned firms in the U.S. are owned by Latinas. Center for Women's Business Research. 2004. *Hispanic Women-Owned Businesses in the United States, 2004: A Fact Sheet*. Washington, DC: Center for Women's Business Research.

⁹DiTomaso, Smith, Post, Farris, and Cordero. n.d. Three forms of inequality: Advantage, the absence of advantage, and disadvantage. Unpublished manuscript. The authors also talk about a lack of advantage for others, which explains the situation of working-class men, for example.

¹⁰Proudford, K. 2003. CGO Working Paper No. 16: *Viewing Dyads in Triadic Terms: Toward a Conceptualization of the In/visible Third in Relationships across Difference*. Boston, MA: Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management. See also Hurtado, A. 1996. *The Color of Privilege: Three Blasphemies on Race and Feminism*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

¹¹Kolb, D., Fletcher, J., Meyerson, D., Merrill-Sands, D., and Ely, R. 1998. *CGO Insights* No. 1: Making change: A framework for promoting gender equity in organizations. Boston, MA: Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management. See also Rowe, M. 1990. Barriers to equality: The power of subtle discrimination to maintain unequal opportunity. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 3(2): 153-163.

¹²Catalyst. 1999. *Women of Color in Corporate Management: Opportunities and Barriers*. New York: Catalyst.

¹³Hayden, C. and Molenkamp, R.J. 2004. Travistock primer II. In S. Cytrynbaum and D.A. Noumair (Eds.), *Group Dynamics, Organizational Irrationality and Social Complexity: Group Relations Reader 3*. Jupiter, FL: A.K. Rice Institute for the Study of Social Systems, pp. 135-157.

¹⁴Dumas, R. 1985. Dilemmas of Black females in leadership. In A.D. Coleman and M.H. Geller (Eds.), *Group Relations Reader 2*. Springfield, VA: Goetz, pp. 323-334.

¹⁵I borrow this term from Jennings, C.L. and Wells, L. 1989. The Wells-Jennings Analysis: A new diagnostic window on race relations in American organizations. In W. Sikes, A.B. Drexler, and J. Gant (Eds.), *The Emerging Practice of Organization Development*.

Arlington, VA: NTL Institute and University Associates, pp. 105-118.

¹⁶See McRae, M. 2003. *CGO Commentaries* No. 2: How do I talk to you, my White sister? Boston, MA: Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management. See also Bell, E. and Nkomo, S. 2001. *Our Separate Ways: Black and White Women and the Struggle for Professional Identity*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press; and Walker, M. and Miller, J.B. 2001. Talking Paper No. 2: *Racial Images and Relational Possibilities*. Wellesley, MA: Wellesley Centers for Women.

¹⁷I am indebted to Bridgette Sheridan, a historian and CGO colleague and author, for this example.

¹⁸For an excellent discussion on the challenging dynamics that must be worked through when engaging across differences from this perspective, see Bell, E.L.J., Meyerson, D., Nkomo, S., and Scully, M. 2003. Interpreting silence and voice in the workplace: A conversation about tempered radicalism among Black and White women researchers. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 39(4): 381-414.

¹⁹Also known as intersectionality, I prefer the term simultaneity. See Holvino, E. 2001. *Op. cit.*, and Holvino, E. Forthcoming. Complicating gender: Organizational change and the simultaneity of race, gender, and class. *Gender, Work, and Organization*.

²⁰See Cole, J.B. and Guy-Sheftall, B. 2003. *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities*. New York: Ballantine Books; and Jones, C. and Shorter-Gooden, K. 2003. *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*. New York: HarperCollins.

²¹Cruz-Janzen, M.I. 2002. Lives on the crossfire: The struggle of multiethnic and multiracial Latinos for identity in a dichotomous and racialized world. *Race, Gender & Class*, 9(2): 47, and Sethi, R.C. 2004. Smells like racism. In P.S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*, 6th ed. New York: Worth Publishers, pp. 143-154.

²²Friedman, S.S. 1995. Beyond White and other: Relationality and narratives of race in feminist discourse. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society*, 21(1), 1-49.

²³Truth, S. 1851/1995. Woman's rights. In Guy-Sheftall, B. (Ed.), *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*. New York: The New Press, p. 36.

²⁴Friedman, S.S. *Op. cit.* p. 38. See also Holvino, E. Forthcoming. Rekindling Lewin's social change spirit: Developing new theory for groups and social justice. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*; and Barvosa-Carter, E. 1999. Multiple identity and coalition building: How identity differences within us enable radical alliances among us. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 2(2): 111-126.

²⁵For an excellent discussion on the role, skills, and challenges of White women engaging across differences, see Brazaitis, S.J. 2004. White women – Protectors of the status quo; positioned to disrupt it. In S. Cytrynbaum and D.A. Noumair (Eds.), *Op. cit.*

²⁶For a more expansive discussion, see Holvino, E. 2001. Deconstructing “coalition building”: What race and ethnicity have to do with it. Paper presented at the Academy of Management Symposium “Bridges Over Troubled Waters: ‘Experiments’ in Working with Differences.” Washington, DC.

²⁷My definition of confrontation is making differences explicit.

²⁸Proudford, K. 1998. Notes on the intra-group origins of inter-group conflict in organizations: Black-White relations as an exemplar. *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Labor and Employment Law*, 1(2): 615-637.

²⁹Machado, A. 1979. “Cantares.” *Proverbios y Cantares* (trans. R. Bly). St. Paul, MN: Ally Press.

Have you read the other articles in the *CGO Commentaries* series?

All are available as free downloads from CGO's website, www.simmons.edu/som/cgo.

No. 4: Releasing the Double Bind of Visibility for Minorities in the Workplace (September 2004)

No. 3: Beyond Diversity: Working Across Differences for Organizational Change (June 2004)

No. 2: How Do I Talk to You, My White Sister? (April 2004)

No. 1: Rethinking Management: What's Gender Got to Do With It? (March 2004)

Copyright 2005, Evangelina Holvino
Center for Gender in Organizations, Simmons School of Management
409 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215 USA
<http://www.simmons.edu/som/cgo>, +1-617-521-3824, cgo@simmons.edu

This document may be linked or reproduced for non-commercial purposes as long as the authors are cited and the copyright notice is visibly displayed. For permission to use this document commercially, please contact CGO.